

Abstract

THESIS: Exploring the effects of demographic and athletic variables on the retention of international student-athletes

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Student retention has long been an issue for college and university administrators. While the topic of student retention has been well explored, smaller samples of the student population, such as international student-athletes, have yet to be analyzed. Within the student-athlete research, many scholars state that the significant cultural differences international student-athletes face warrant exploration. Utilizing cultural competency theory (CCT) as the framework, the purpose of this study was to examine athletic and demographic variables to determine if any can predict the retention of international student-athletes through four years. Retention is defined as the continuous enrollment in a college or university every semester for one eligibility cycle, typically four years. Nine independent variables were used to evaluate retention among NCAA Division I international student-athletes: gender, location of home country (by continent/region), English proficiency of home country, sport, type of sport (individual or team), scholarship type (headcount or equivalency), coaching change, average team winning percentage, and team winning percentage in final year of competition. Correlation matrices and multiple linear regressions were used to determine (1) if there is a correlation between the variables, and (2) if any of the variables can aid in predicting retention of international student-athletes. Additionally, post-hoc cross tabulations were conducted to further explore the significant variables. The results

highlighted how certain athletic variables are significant predictors of retention, while demographic variables did not impact retention. Ultimately, the findings from this study have the potential to help college athletic personnel create best practices for developing and retaining international student-athletes.